

REMARKS

Claims 1 - 4, 7, 10 - 12, 16, 20 - 23 and 24 - 28 remain in this application. Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 16, and 23 have been amended by the present response. Support for the amendments may be found at paragraphs [0014]; [0016]; and [0018]. No new matter is added by these amendments. Claims 5 - 6, 8 - 9, 13 - 15, and 17 - 19 have been cancelled by the present amendment.

In the Action, the drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) because all boxes in Fig. 1 - Fig. 6 need to have a descriptive label. 37 CFR 1.84(p)(4) states:

The same part of an invention appearing in more than one view of the drawing must always be designated by the same reference character, and the same character must never be used to designate different parts.

Applicants have reviewed the drawings and determined that all reference characters are used consistently and properly. Furthermore, the drawings contain no boxes requiring descriptive labels such as the boxes in a block diagram. The drawings are representative line drawings of actual structures, such as shopping carts, counters and recognition system components. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection are requested.

In the Action, claims 1 - 28 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,206,165 (Lenander) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,486,768 (French). In view of the present amendment, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Lenander teaches a system for returning service carts where the service carts are equipped with electronic communication devices. Stationary electronic devices are located at tills and cart sheds. The stationary electronic devices read the information provided by the electronic communication devices of the carts which is evaluated and provided to an electronic signal director. The electronic signal director provides the cart data to a stationary electronic device located at the cart shed. When a cart is returned to the cart shed, its return is recorded by the stationary electronic device of the cart shed whereby a user may collect a reward for returning the cart.

French teaches a cart return system that is linked to a frequent shopper-type reward program. French discloses a cart corral that is equipped with conductive loop sensors that detect the relative position of shopping carts entering and exiting the corral. A customer card reader is located on one of the corral posts. The card reader is in communication with the store computer and will issue a credit to the customer account when carts are returned and the customer's frequent shopper card is read.

In view of the present amendment, Applicant believes the § 103 rejection is moot. The present invention claims a system that detects and rewards the return of shopping carts to collection points at a shopping center by the optical recognition of a customer. The system of the present invention identifies the customer by their physical features rather than the shopping cart as in Lenander. Thus, there is no need to uniquely identify the cart as in Lenander. Additionally, this feature is not suggested or disclosed by French. Both Lenander and French also teach electronically "tagging" the shopping carts for tracking purposes. As stated above, the claimed invention identifies the

customer by optical recognition and does not require the carts to be tagged for recognition.

The prior art of record fails to suggest Applicant's system utilizing optical recognition of a customer in identifying a customer in order to issue a bonus upon returning a cart. In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 103 rejections.

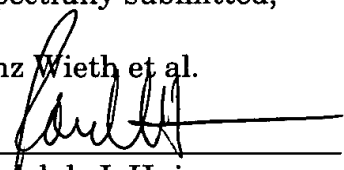
If for any reason the Examiner believes that an interview, either telephonically or in person, would assist in the prosecution of the application, the Examiner is invited to call the Applicants' attorney at the Examiner's convenience.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application, including claims 1 - 4, 7, 10 - 12, 16, 20 - 23 and 24 - 28, is in condition for allowance, and a Notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosures